

INTERVIEW WITH DELBERT TREW

by David K. Dunaway

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Resources in Texas

Norbert Schlegel (Shamrock) – Shamrock newspaper – Bill Howe (Shamrock newspaper) – David Rushing (Shamrock Chamber of Commerce) – Lela, bootleggers – Kellerville Road – Zach T. Jones Service Station – Rita Crockett (McLean) – Sammy Haignes (McLean) – Northfork Antique Shop – Lovett Library (Pampa) – McLean/Alanreed area museum – Mildred Hill, Alanreed historian, South (Carolina) – First Baptist Church – Billy Bob Adams, cemetery records – Bud Schaeffer (Jericho) – Brittens and Kuehlers (Groom) – John Reed (Jericho and Groom) – Sybil and Glen Harrell, Craig Memorial Rest Home (Amarillo) – Bobby Lee, Big Texan (Amarillo) – Panhandle Plains Archives – fixing the highways ('30s and '40s) – CCC camps – Amarillo downtown library – Linda Drake (Vega) – Cal Farley, Boys Ranch (Oldham County)

Collectors

Dot Leavitt – Geneva Davis (Wildorado), Craig Memorial Rest Home (Amarillo) – Landergen, Melba Rook (Spearman) – Tommy Loveless (Adrian) – Fran Houser (Adrian) – Mr. Ershman's son (Del Rio) – Elk City 66 paper – T. Lindsay – Jerry McClanahan (Corsicana) – Mark Potter (Vernon)

Collections outside of Texas

Steve Rider (New York State) – Dave Clarke (Chicago) – Michael Wallis – Bob Moore, Route 66 Magazine archives

Other interviewees

Michael Wallis – Jim Ross – Jerry McClanahan – Scott Nelson

DAVID DUNAWAY: We're here to talk about the kind of resources that exist about Route 66 in Texas: the people, the archives, the places; then to get your opinion, based on that workshop we had, about who we should interview and what would be the most important topics. Now I did take some notes when we had that workshop so even though the Association seems not to have those materials right now, maybe they'll turn up, but just in case I thought I would ask you again.

Maybe the best way to begin is to go from the Texas-Oklahoma border all the way over to Glenrio in our minds and think about the people who know the most about Route 66 and who have collections, and also the people who really know or who have stories to tell about the road.

DELBERT TREW: I can think of only one man in the Shamrock area that's alive—so many of the people we have put into our Hall of Fame are dead. Norbert Schlegel (who runs the I-40 West Camp) has lots of photographs of the early days of Route 66. He lived on Route 66 all of his life as a salesman. He's also a photographer and a writer for the Shamrock paper.

The Shamrock newspaper has tremendous archives because they have nearly always had the big celebration over there, the Shamrock celebration. Bill Howe was the editor for many years. He always had a green beard at the celebration. If he's still alive then he would be an excellent source. He just retired from the newspaper.

They have copies of the past newspapers. In a small town, that's about all the archives there are. I'm sure they have them all there; whether they're all on microfilm, I don't know. They have always been a progressive newspaper. Their Chamber of Commerce has always been very active, so it's possible they could have scrapbooks.

The new people at the Shamrock Museum are fabulous. They just restored their service station down there, downtown; not on Route 66, but it is excellent. They have quite a few things in their museum archives, but I'm not sure what's there.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Is it a room with scrapbooks?

DELBERT TREW: It's a restored service station, excellent photo opportunity. Then the museum is just a couple doors north of that and you can go in and get information there. It's an old hotel and they've got probably 10 rooms of items and a lot of them are probably Route 66 oriented. Then they took a house that belonged to one of the early-day doctors right across the street and they are restoring it. And then the bed-and-breakfast, which was a nice deal. That's all there together.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Are there any town historians or people?

DELBERT TREW: Those two, Bill Howe, and Schlegel since he's been there all his life. I bet they know of other people but they would be who to start with.

Other resources would be David Rushing, head of the Chamber of Commerce; his office is in the U-Drop Inn in the back. He has a lot of get up and go, and he generally knows where things are. I think he was born and raised there. He's the big push behind everything they've got over there at the moment.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Heading this way, I guess the next town would be Groom?

DELBERT TREW: We don't think there is anything in Lela. There were some old stations there years ago, and they tell me that the biggest bootlegger in the country lived there at one time. About the only thing we have ever heard about Lela is they used to change the bus route. The bootleggers would make some kind of a deal and they would go a different route and the next year they would go a mile or two different than that. This is before '34.

Next would be the Kellerville road and there was a big station there. I just wrote about it for our Route 66 Magazine: the Zach T. Jones Service Station. They were pretty important because that's where all the soldiers went from the P.O.W camp. Mr. Jones had seven daughters and most of the older ones were pretty darn good-looking so as a result, nearly all of the soldiers spent a lot of time there.

Another thing interesting on Kellerville Road: right behind that just a few feet off Route 66, I think they had 30 mailboxes in a line. We can't find pictures of it. Somewhere there are pictures of those mailboxes. That brought a lot of people to that store.

County Line Road didn't last that long. It was just another station two miles farther along west. Then you come to McLean.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Who else besides Rita Crockett, whom I have spoken to, really knows Route 66 in the old days?

DELBERT TREW: I would say, at the moment, it would be Sammy Haynes. He was mayor here for many years and his wife owns the North Fork Antique shop. She was a school teacher for many years and also wrote for and published the newspaper. She was responsible for putting all the McLean newspapers on microfilm. They are in the Lovett [Memorial] Library in Pampa, Texas. Everything is on microfilm there, not here. That's one of the projects we're working on here. A lot of our stuff here is up there.

Now, I did get 27 years worth of newspapers, from 1928 to 2000, in hardback copies. The original 14 were pretty bad and I recovered them—just saved everything we could possibly save. Then I got 9 copies of 1990 to 2000 that are in mint condition. I built a big case for them with glass doors, and they will be in the downtown museum. I built a podium top so you could pull out the big books and lay them on top and look at them. Then we also have a copier there.

DAVID DUNAWAY: That's a real find.

DELBERT TREW: I think there's a real treasure-trove from '29. It should tell about the coming of Route 66. Another item that was so interesting was 1943 and '44 because they told about the P.O.W camp.

In Alanreed, the historian over there just died. Nearly everything she has written and collected over there is on file in the McLean/Alanreed Area Museum on Main Street.

There's another deal coming in belonging to a lady named Mildred Hill, in South Carolina. She is the big Alanreed historian. I think she has about 30 volumes that she's put together of Alanreed history that is supposed to be left to the museum. They are published and in her hands.

Each year at the annual Alanreed school reunion they put up pictures all around the gymnasium from this. She is the true Alanreed historian. All of that stuff can be accessed.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Do we know where those volumes are?

DELBERT TREW: With her, I'm sure. We haven't talked to her in a while but she knows her stuff. Her daddy owned the bank in Alanreed and she was raised there. They've got pictures of all of the businesses.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Do we know where Mrs. Hill is living?

DELBERT TREW: We can find that address.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Are there any other collections in Alanreed?

DELBERT TREW: Not that I know of. I'm not sure what the First Baptist Church has, it's the oldest church on Route 66 in Texas. The other archival records are with Billy Bob Adams. He was a school superintendent over there for many years and he's in charge of all the cemetery records so he has all of the cemetery records and keeps up with it. The cemetery has also put up a directory in the cemetery. So that's another source.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Then Groom?

DELBERT TREW: Jericho would be next. Bud Schaeffer lives north of Jericho on the creek and he's a farmer and semi-retired. All of the Schaeffer family owned all the land over there. Bud is the historian over there. I don't know how much information they have, but he tends the cemetery in Jericho. He was born and raised there. He would be the resource there. His sister lives in Pampa. Peggy something. She was the one who was responsible for getting the Texas historical marker at Jericho Cemetery.

There's a number of old-timers that live there in Groom. The Brittens and Kuehlers have lived there all their lives and have lived on Route 66. The wife of the man that put up the leaning tower. Any of those people would be great sources.

DAVID DUNAWAY: If you had to choose one for the Groom area to interview, who do you think you might choose?

DELBERT TREW: John Reed was from Jericho and Groom, and he was one of our Hall of Famers. He moved to Houston so he would be hard to get hold of. Nearly all of the old Groom families lived there all of their lives.

The best one to get to would be at the Craig Memorial Rest Home there in Amarillo. Sybil and Glen Harrell. They had the hardware store and newspaper.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Those would be the people you would interview?

DELBERT TREW: I picked him because he would be the easiest to get to. In Amarillo, Bobby Lee would be my pick there, or his mother. Her husband established the first Big Texan.

I would think that anything concerning Route 66 in Amarillo would be in Panhandle Plains. I don't think that Amarillo College has anything. If you want to know anything about Amarillo, go to Panhandle Plains [Historical Museum, on West Texas A&M University campus, in Canyon].

My son, who is an architect in Austin, has done a bunch of research work on Amarillo in the archives at Panhandle Plains. He says there was a crazy dentist in Amarillo that was a photographer, and W.T. [West Texas A&M University, Canyon] has a big file cabinet of this guy's photographs of Amarillo. So, that's in the Panhandle Plains Archives. He says you can go in there and find pictures.

The Architect Association had groups make videos for the annual convention. His crew made a video of buildings. His won.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I remember there were a couple of books about Amarillo.

DELBERT TREW: I've got the latest one. I've got a book that is nothing but Amarillo postcards. I got permission to use that in my Bugby book. A lot of those would be Route 66.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I was reading the Amarillo newspaper and it said that in the '30s and '40s that every able-bodied man living in Amarillo had to spend three to six hours a year fixing the highway.

DELBERT TREW: If you live anywhere along any of the roads, you were supposed to spend—now you could hire someone to take your place—everybody was supposed to do that. If you didn't do it and refused to do it they would figure out how much that cost and would put it against your taxes. This was before any county or state maintenance programs.

DAVID DUNAWAY: In Amarillo I heard a lot of that labor went to Route 66.

DELBERT TREW: Probably. I'm sure that's right. I think that from Lark to Alanreed was build by CCC camps and WPA. I know we had that here because

they were working at Pala? Canyon. T. [Lindsay] Baker told me the Panhandle Plains has a fabulous CCC Camp deal. That's probably where some of that labor came in. If you were a land owner and didn't take care of your part of the road they could hold that against you, but if you didn't own anything they couldn't do anything. The CCC Camp can be tied to Route 66 very closely. Most of that was done at the worst time of the economy. There's an area there that nobody has touched on.

DAVID DUNAWAY: You don't know of an Amarillo Historical Society?

DELBERT TREW: I'm sure there is. If I wanted to learn anything I would go to the Downtown Library on Third Street. It's the best library. The basement is filled with uncirculated volumes taken off the shelves since the library opened. They will look up things for you and go down there. If there is some Amarillo history it would be there.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Do you have any active Amarillo members in your Route 66 Association?

DELBERT TREW: When you get north of Vega. You'd have to see Linda there. Our lady that was with us so long and did such a wonderful job there. I saw her when I spoke at the Chamber of Commerce and I visited with her. She won't discuss it though. Linda Drake.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Would the Chamber of Commerce or someone have records from Vega?

DELBERT TREW: She would know. She would have them in her office if they have them over there. A lot of times you will get into one of those little towns and the public library will have things. I don't know what the situation is there in Vega.

Another source that could be some information there would be at the Boy's Ranch in Oldham County. Cal Farley established that and was the big deal in the heyday. He was big in Amarillo at that time. Since he founded Boy's Ranch there would be a great deal of information on Cal Farley there.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Are there any collectors out there? I guess there's Dot.

DELBERT TREW: Dot Leavitt is the only one left. She is the only collector I know of. Geneva Davis ran the store and post office there in Wildorado for about 30 years. She gave us a lot of artifacts. She could be interviewed at Craig Memorial also.

Landerger. I don't know anything about Landrengen. George Rook was the biggest collector but he's dead now. There could be some information his wife would have. His wife's name is Melba and she lives in Spearman, Texas. I'm sure that if we set up an interview in Amarillo she would come.

DAVID DUNAWAY: What do you think happened to his collection?

DELBERT TREW: It was sold, unless she kept some stuff back. He had the largest set of Route 66 signs that anybody has ever seen. They are all gone; went to a guy in New Jersey.

DAVID DUNAWAY: So she lives in Spearman. Where's that?

DELBERT TREW: Right north of here, the top of the panhandle. I'm sure all you'd have to do is call her. Setting up an interview at the Craig Memorial Home would be best. I would suggest setting it up there. They don't make too much noise in a rest home.

DAVID DUNAWAY: After that comes Adrian?

DELBERT TREW: Adrian, the only guy we know is Loveless. Tommy Loveless, he's available, mind's good. He runs the only grocery store in Adrian. That's where Fran Houser is also. She wasn't on Route 66 way back. You could interview her about modern times, her running her café.

Tommy Loveless's dad ran the Phillips 66. All through those years, had a big service station all those years. He now has the big QuickStop on the Westside. He's been there all this time.

I don't know anything about Glenrio. There's a man out there that's a son of Mr. Ershman. I don't know where he went to, but when they left Glenrio they went over to the next town, Indie, and put in the big Longhorn Station that operated for many years.

There's a lady in San Jon that's in the curio shop about a block off the interstate south. That lady knows lots of stuff about those towns. I don't know her name, but it's the first big gift shop when you turn south off the interstate.

Ershman were the big family because they owned the big truck stop and restaurant and bar and the land all around there. It was his money that built the Longhorn Bar in Indie. Ershman was the big man all the time. He was the one that was telling me about workers sleeping in cardboard behind his building when they were building in the '30s and everybody was starving and no jobs everywhere. He was there through that part of it. There is a son; I think he's still alive. I don't know what his name is. They had some racehorses, so I think he'd be pretty easy to find. The lady at that gift shop would tell you.

Mr. Flynt died. He ran the post office at Bard [New Mexico] all those years. I think he has family that's living. The neighbor on 66 from the time it was dirt until today. They had to move the post office three times when 66 was being built. He had registered Hereford cattle.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Who were the big collectors of material on Route 66 in Texas that are left?

DELBERT TREW: The biggest collection is right back here. I would say that Dot may be. In Elk City, this guy put out a 66 paper and they had quite a bit of stuff at one time. I can't think of his name. We have copies of all of them. They didn't stay in business long. 8 or 10 issues.

DAVID DUNAWAY: A lot of these people are in the rest home there, it sounds like.

DELBERT TREW: Amarillo is where we all go. It's easier to get to Amarillo than having people come here. We could call those people for an interview.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Maybe Rita could go to Shamrock and speak to that gentleman there?

DELBERT TREW: He would come up there too. Another thing is that it could probably be done on a Sunday. Maybe a Saturday morning.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Other than what we've talked about now, there are no other private collections? How about T. Lindsay?

DELBERT TREW: T. Lindsay has got a copy of everything we've got here, plus he's researching for food on Route 66. Another neat thing: he says that down in Denton, the museum has a collection of menus, thousands of menus, and he found a bunch of 66 stuff there. So you just don't know where this darn stuff is at.

DAVID DUNAWAY: That's what we're trying to do: find it and make a record.

DELBERT TREW: T. Lindsay, if you check with him he can tell you the exact file, and who to call. Jerry McClanahan is in Corsicana, and Mark Potter is in Vernon, Texas. They have these maps and Mark Potter writes for the Federation.

DAVID DUNAWAY: I hope we come across more attics of things.

DELBERT TREW: I don't think you're going to find it in this country. For one thing, it wasn't the greatest thing to collect because everybody that lives on 66 took it for granted. The biggest collectors all live way off. People on Route 66 just aren't interested.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Who in the U.S. has important collections on Route 66?

DELBERT TREW: I know Steve Rider does; he's in New York State. He writes for the Federation or Route 66 Magazine. Then there's Dave Clarke from Chicago. He's got a collection. I would guess the biggest collection is at Michael Wallis' house.

DAVID DUNAWAY: Now Dave Clark is in Chicago itself, the city?

DELBERT TREW: I would guess Bob Moore would have the greatest collection of photographs and possibly library stuff. The Route 66 magazine archives would be a fabulous collection. Those two guys would be someone to talk to.

DAVID DUNAWAY: So there's nobody out here in the West?

DELBERT TREW: Not that we know of. I think that Bobby Lee has a lot of the Big Texan artifacts. I'm just not sure what Panhandle Plains has. I'm going down there for this CCC Camp work so I'll try to see what they have on Route 66.

DAVID DUNAWAY: That's really useful. If you were to think nationwide about people Park Service might want to arrange for interviews with, who might you recommend?

DELBERT TREW: Michael Wallis, Jim Ross, Jerry McLehannan? Jeff Meyer would not be a really good interview because he has trouble speaking but he knows his stuff. Scott Nelson [Kansas].